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ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceptions of directors of curriculum and instruction in three regions of the United States: Massachusetts, Texas, and Wisconsin. The purpose was to determine to what extent an effort was made to provide inservice training for teachers, administrators, board members, and community members on issues of gender equity in curriculum offerings in K-12 public schools. A second purpose was to determine future needs to assure gender equity in the classroom. Fifty surveys were mailed to curriculum directors selected at random in the three states. The return rate for each state was 48 percent. The findings of the survey are examined and conclusions drawn about the quality of gender equity inservice education in place and what remains to be done. (EH)

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ANALYSES OF PERCEPTIONS OF CURRICULUM DIRECTORS REGARDING GENDER EQUITY INSERVICE IN WISCONSIN, MASSACHUSETTS AND TEXAS

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Introduction

Educational reform initiatives have caused both teachers and administrators to rethink many issues relating the delivery of educational services, especially in the area of gender equity in K-12 curricular offerings. This issue has surfaced as researchers have sought to examine perceived behavior versus actual behavior. In a recent study, it was determined that while many adults pride themselves on their beliefs that they are neither sexist or racist, examination of actual behaviors show racist and sexist behaviors and interpretations occurring (Amstutz, 1994).

During the past decade educators have sought to empower students and have striven to be politically correct, but far too often only in word and not in deed. McGuire (1991) points out that by simply saying diversity is valued is meaningless without ridding ourselves and our various institutions of sexist and racist behaviors. Politically correct language does not, and will not, replace positive action. Equality must be practiced.

Learning to recognize and to deal with cultural biases is important because many educators tend to reflect the white middle-class culture. Interaction and interpretation will be from this cultural context. Haberman (1987, p.26) states "[teachers] do not and cannot teach what they do not know."

Institutions will often design policies to purposely avoid issues of race and gender (Giddings, 1990). Such avoidance will help to maintain the status quo, but by adopting this avoidance posture, little will be done to demonstrate the potential contributions of women and minorities. Nearly a decade ago Muwakkie (1989, p.13) noted that "if we do not talk about these problems and take them on, they are going to get much, much worse."

A number of realities suggest that for all the effort and discussion of gender equity being an integral part of the K-12 curriculum, many school districts are not predisposed to actually implementing gender equity. Curriculum directors are not comfortable in the role as change agent; secondly, any movement toward this policy must come from local boards of education or school committees who, as political entities, think in terms of their voting constituencies (Sharp and Walter, 1997). Any movement toward the ideal of gender equity will no doubt be minuscule.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of Directors of Curriculum and Instruction in three regions of the United States: Wisconsin, Massachusetts and Texas to determine to what extent an effort has been made to provide inservice training for teachers, administrators, board members, and community members regarding issues of gender equity in curriculum offerings in K-12 public schools. A secondary purpose of this study was to determine what needs to be done in the future to assure that there is gender equity in the classroom. These states were chosen for a twofold reason: they offered diversity of geographical differences encompassing the Midwest, the East and the South; and the researchers have been affiliated with the educational systems in these states.

Methodology

The study was based upon equity theory as defined Catherine Marshall and Gary Anderson (1995) citing the evolution of equity issues through access, the concept of differences, and finally, the institutionalization of gender roles. It is with the institutionalization of gender roles that this study is concerned.

Data were gathered through a quantitative survey mailed to randomly selected Directors of Curriculum and Instruction in the three regions noted in the study title. Data were subjected to a frequency analysis and analysis of variance using SPSS on the Texas A&M University network. Statistical analysis at an alpha level of .05 was undertaken to determine significance.

The population for this research consisted of all curriculum directors in the States of Massachusetts, Wisconsin and Texas. To select the sample from the population of curriculum directors, a listing of directors was obtained from each of the state educational agencies. The sample was randomly selected from these data bases. Survey questionnaires were reviewed by a panel of professors, teachers, and administrators and revised as indicated. Fifty surveys were mailed to the directors in each state. The return rate was 48% for each state.

The research questions being asked were: Has progress been made toward creating gender equity in the curriculum and classroom through inservice training and teacher evaluation? What still needs to be accomplished through inservice training and teacher evaluation?

Findings and Conclusions

In examining the overall results, the demographics section revealed that most of the respondents (47.1) had been directors of curriculum and instruction fewer than six years. 55.9% had been directors for fewer than six years in their present district of employment. The majority of school districts had over 4,000 pupils (50%) with only 5.6% having less than 500 pupils. Most directors described their community and school district as being "suburban" (38.9%). Of the responding curriculum directors, 71.4% identified themselves as female and 28.6% identified themselves as male.

Only 2.8% of the respondents felt they had some formal training in gender equity during their college coursework. 83.3% felt there had been some type of inservice training for district administrators while 72.7% felt there was a need for additional gender equity training of administrators. 80.6% of the directors indicated that teachers had inservice training in gender equity, while 74.3% felt there had been no inservice training for school board members in their districts. The survey results shown in percentages follows:

1. Looking back on your formal training as director of curriculum and instruction, which of the following best describes the degree of emphasis on gender equity in you training?

2.8% I received specific course work in providing gender equity in curriculum and instruction.

47.2% I received information in providing gender equity in curriculum and instruction through other course work.

50.0% I received little or no information in providing gender equity in

curriculum and instruction through my formal course work.

2. There has been inservice training of classroom teachers in my district in promoting gender equity in the classroom.

13.9	66.7	16.7	2.8
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

3. There has been inservice training of administrators in my district regarding gender equity in the classroom.

19.4	63.9	13.9	2.8
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

4. There has been inservice training for the school board regarding gender equity in the classroom.

2.9	22.9	62.9	11.4
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

5. There is a need for inservice for classroom teachers in my district to assure gender equity in the classroom.

11.1	72.2	13.9	2.8
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

6. There is a need for inservice for building administrators in my district to assure gender equity in the classroom.

13.9	58.3	25.0	2.8
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

7. There is a need for inservice for guidance counselors in this district to assure gender equity in the classroom.

19.4	52.8	22.2	5.6
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

8. There is a need for inservice for school board members in this district to assure gender equity in the classroom.

8.3	55.6	33.3	2.8
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

9. There is a need for inservice for central office administrators in this district to assure gender equity in the classroom.

11.4	45.7	37.1	5.7
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

10. There is a need for community education regarding gender equity in the classroom in this district.

13.9	63.9	22.2	0.0
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

11. Providing gender equity in the classroom is a component of this district's teacher evaluation.

2.8	30.6	58.3	8.3
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

12. Providing gender equity in the classroom should be a component of this district's teacher evaluation.

15.6	59.4	21.9	3.1
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

13. Improvement in providing gender equity in the classroom has taken place in this district since I have been in my present position.

11.1	69.4	19.4	0.0
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

14. There are plans in progress in this district to improve gender equity in the classroom.

13.9	55.6	30.6	0.0
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

15. I would be willing to implement a plan for improving gender equity in the classrooms in this district if appropriate resources were provided.

17.6	73.5	8.8	0.0
Strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

16. How many years, including the present school year, have you been a director of curriculum and instruction?

47.1	23.5	8.8	20.6
1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	over 15 years

17. How many years, including the present school year, have you been a director of curriculum and instruction in your present district?

55.9	20.6	14.7	8.8
1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	over 15 years

18. Approximately how many students are there in your entire school district?

5.6	11.1	8.3	25.0	50.0
less than 500	501-1,000	1,001-2,500	2,500-4,000	over 4,000

19. Which term best describes your school district?

2.8	22.2	22.2	38.9	13.9
rural	rural/small town	small/medium city	suburban	urban

20. I am

71.4	28.6
female	male

Further data analysis indicated that the response to the need for guidance counselors to receive inservice gender equity training was significantly related to the years of experience of the respondent in their position as director of curriculum with those having fewer years of experience seeing a greater need for such training. The need for equity training in the community was significantly related to the length of time the respondent had been employed as director of curriculum in their present district with newer employees as seeing a greater need for inservice within the community. It is interesting to note that need for gender equity to be included as a component of teacher evaluations was significantly related to the gender of the respondent with the female respondents indicating the need to include the component in the evaluation.

Analysis of variance indicated the feeling that the need for school board members, administrators, and guidance counselors to receive inservice training was significantly related to the gender of the respondent and the size of the district in which the respondent worked with positive responses coming from the females in districts with populations between 501 and 1,000 students. There was a significant interaction between gender and the training the director had received in coursework when responding to the need for community education with females indicating that they had received little or no training during their formal coursework. The interaction between gender and community size was significant when stating whether or not gender equity was currently a component of the teacher evaluations with females in districts with a population of 1001-2,500 indicating it was not a component of the present evaluations. The interaction between district type (rural, suburban, etc.), the experience of the director in their present district, and the size of the community with the gender of the respondent was significant when expressing the need for gender equity to be considered in future teacher evaluations. Suburban females, females with less than six years of experience, and females from districts of 2,500-4,000 felt there was a need to include gender equity as a component of teacher evaluations while the males in these categories felt that gender equity should not be considered as a component of teacher evaluations. The final significant interaction was between gender and the district type when determining of there had been improvement in providing gender equity in the classroom since the current director had been hired. Males from districts ranging in size from 2,500 to 4,000 felt that improvement had been made while females from similar districts did not feel this way.

Analysis of variance showed a significant difference in the way the directors from Massachusetts responded to gender equity as presently being a component of the teacher evaluations. The directors from MA felt that gender equity was presently a component of the teacher evaluations while the directors from WI and TX agreed that it was not a component of the present teacher evaluations.

Respondents from WI did not feel that there was a need for gender equity inservice training for classroom teachers while those from MA and TX felt that there was a need for teacher inservice. WI and TX felt there was a need for inservice for administrators, school board members and the community while MA was equally divided between agree and disagree. Respondents from WI and TX worked mostly in urban districts while respondents from MA were primarily suburban.

Summary and Recommendations

The large majority of directors of curriculum and instruction in these three states

were female. This is consistent with previous data regarding the gender of directors. It is largely a "woman's" job while the positions of superintendent, director of personnel, and business manager are over-proportionately male.

Almost none (2.8%) of the directors had received any formal coursework in gender equity during their formal training. 50% of the directors had received little or no training during their formal preparation in how to assure gender equity in the curriculum and in the classroom in their position as director of curriculum and instruction.

It can be concluded from this study that female directors of curriculum and instruction feel that some gains have been made in assuring gender equity in the classroom. These women also think that providing gender equity in the classroom should be a component of the teacher evaluations while the males do not feel that evaluating teachers as to their providing for gender equity in the classroom should be part of the teachers' formal evaluations. This may indicate that men are not as acutely aware of the need for further emphasis on providing for gender equity as are the females. It can also be concluded that there is a need for gender equity training for school guidance counselors, administrators, and community members.

The people responsible for the education of the students in the classroom must not assume that because progress has been made toward gender equity in the classroom that there is no need for further vigilance. Those who hire central office staff may also be aware that the position of director of curriculum and instruction has become a "woman's" position while the positions of superintendent, director of personnel, and business manager are still held largely by males.

University programs which prepare administrators, guidance counselors, and teacher must provide coursework in their programs which include information regarding gender equity in the curriculum and in classroom instruction. Curriculum and Instruction Directors must be able to evaluate the status of gender equity in the classroom and in the curriculum in order to plan appropriate training when necessary for all the populations who influence curriculum and its delivery. School Boards must be given as awareness of the importance and necessity of implementing gender equity in local K-12 curricular offerings since school boards are the policy-making body.

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